

Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies, Vol. 45 (1) (July 2018): 79-102

@ History, Politics & Securities Research Centre, UKM; ISSN 2180-0251 (electronic), 0126-5644 (paper)

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## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF JAPAN'S INTERNATIONAL HUMAN SECURITY DIPLOMACY: TOWARDS A "NORMAL" COUNTRY?**

*This article offers an alternative perspective of Japan's international human security diplomacy concerning the underlying motivations that has caused Japan to pursue its international human security diplomacy in such proactive and aggressive manner. So far Japan's involvement in the international human security initiatives had only been examined separately in the literature, with not much attention been given towards its linkage with Japan's relentless efforts and restraints throughout the decades towards becoming a normal state. This article argues that when Japan's involvement in international human security is studied together with its underlying ambition of becoming a normal state, the approach can no longer be solely understood as Japan's effort to compensate the imbalances between its reactive international political posture and its significant status as the world's third-biggest economy. Instead, this involvement should be examined from the perspective of Japan's own national security requirements. Most importantly, it should be examined alongside Japan's effort to strategically participate, contribute, and gain greater autonomy in the international political sphere under its envisioned status as a normal country. From this perspective, the motivation behind Japan's persistence and aggressive pursuit of its international human security diplomacy becomes clearer under Prime Minister Abe's "proactive contribution to peace". It implies a shift in Japan's security identity from a 'peace state' to an 'international state' that sees Japan playing a more active role in responding to the structural changes of the international security environment. In particular, it corresponds with Japan's effort under the Abe administration to inculcate worldwide awareness that becoming a "normal state" is a prerequisite for Japan to collaborate with the international community and contribute effectively towards sustainable world peace and stability.*

**Keywords:** Japan, Human Security, Normal Country, Security, Diplomacy

### **Introduction**

Since the introduction of the human security concept by the United Nations in 1994, Japan has been a staunch champion of the cause, taking proactive

steps towards operationalizing the human security concept internationally. This article looks back at the origin of Japan's international human security diplomacy and how the human security approach persists as a pillar in Japan's foreign policy. It argues that the aggressive involvement of Japan's international effort in promoting human security is the answer to the lacunae in Japan's ambition of becoming a normal state. Additionally, this article views that Japan's approach to human security should be understood from the context of Japan's own national security requirements; as well as its quest to strategically participate, contribute, and gain greater autonomy in the international political sphere. From Japan's point of view, this could only be implemented effectively under its envisioned status as a normal country. With the increasing global dimensions infused into its foreign policy as a result of Japan's active involvement in its international human security diplomacy, Japan could articulate its global vision and objectives at the international arena, and demonstrate its leadership that commensurate with its national stature. This continuous effort would, over time, justify Japan's aspiration towards becoming a normal state, occupying an *"honored place" in the international community*. This article is organized into four parts. The first part introduces the background of Japan and human security. Meanwhile, Japan's International Human Security Diplomacy such as the motivations towards international human security diplomacy, war guilt and gestures of atonement, shaping a favorable geostrategic environment, threat perceptions, UN doctrine on the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) and domestic political intervention is covered in the second part. The third part analyzes Japan's efforts in gaining international trust as a *"Proactive Contributor to Peace"*. Finally, part four concludes the discussion and provides some suggestions in Japan's way forward towards becoming a 'normal country'.

## Japan and Human Security

Since the end of World War II, the concept of security has been highly pursued in the effort to raise the possibility of non-violent change in international relations. According to Wolfers, security measures the absence of threats to acquired values and the absence of fear that such values will be attacked. While elusive and open to many interpretations, the most noticeable characteristics of the term security in the international relations theory are its identification with national security. This could be seen in the narrow sense of military strategy dominated by the realist perspective that has been built upon the premise of relationships among nations. In this context, security studies in international relations theory are closely related to military security.

Nevertheless, the collapse of the Cold War system based on the balance of fear between two superpowers has further lessened the sense of imminent danger due to a nuclear confrontation. As a result, other security concerns such

as transnational terrorism, massive population movements, infectious diseases, and threats to the earth's environment, have become more crucial. State-centric (or politico/military-centric) view of security alone is no longer effective in dealing with the global issues that surpass the territorial boundaries of states. In this regard, Buzan<sup>1</sup> have presented a different view regarding security that is referred to as "peace studies", rather than realism-oriented "security studies" that were far too "war-prone". Although the central theme of his argument is the pursuit of freedom from threat by a state, Buzan is of the view that the security of human collectivities is affected by factors in five major areas namely; military, political, economic, societal, and environmental.

Buzan's approach towards what he termed "common security" is based on the belief that no country can increase its own security without increasing the security of other countries at the same time. Similarly, the 1982 Report of the United Nations Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues (UNICDSI) of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) proclaimed that "*... a doctrine of common security must replace the present expedient of deterrence through armaments. International peace must rest on a commitment to joint survival rather than a threat of mutual destruction*". Porter & Brown<sup>2</sup> further complimented this view by emphasizing that the main threats to global security come not from individual states but from global problems shared by the global community.

This broadening of the scope and domain of the concept of common security by Buzan as well as Porter & Brown paved the way for a clearer definition of human security. According to the Commission on Human Security (CHS) of the United Nations, the definition of human security is "*...to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment ... protecting fundamental freedoms ... that are the essence of life ... protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations ... using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations ... creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity*".<sup>3</sup> It re-conceptualizes security in a fundamental way by concentrating on the security of the individuals and their protection and empowerment, moving away from the state-centric conceptions of security that focused primarily on the safety of states from military aggression. It also draws attention to a multitude of threats that cut across different aspects of human life while highlighting the interface between security, development, and human rights. At the same time, human security promotes a newly integrated, coordinated, and people-centered approach to advancing peace, security and development within and across nations.

When the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) introduced the concept of "human security" for the first time in 1994, Japan was one of the countries that supported the new idea. A year later in 1995, in his speech

at the Special Commemorative Meeting of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama endorsed human security as an important idea for the UN. This made him one of the first heads of states to endorse the idea.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, in 1998, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi further pushed the human security concept to the forefront of Japan's foreign policy by pledging approximately USD30 billion in aids to countries hit by the Asian financial crisis.

Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori continued the progress made by Obuchi by jointly establishing and financing the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) with the UN. This fund supports the implementation of human security projects focusing on the Lowest of the Least Developed Countries to help fill the gap between humanitarian and development assistance.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the UNTFHS, Japan also helped establish the Commission on Human Security (CHS) in 2001 to further develop the human security concept and recommend techniques for its practical application. In 2003, Japan revised the Charter of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the first time since the ODA Charter was adopted in 1992. The new Charter pledged to contribute to peace and development of the international community in accordance with the UN human security guidelines, as well as to help ensure Japan's own security and prosperity.

Japan's financial contribution towards the international development agenda began even as early as 1954 when it joined the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific. In October 1954, Japan signed the Japan-Burma Peace Treaty and Agreement on Reparations and Economic Cooperation, followed by the succession of reparations treaties signed with the Philippines, Indonesia, and the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Subsequently, Japan also extended grant aid to Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Micronesia, as well as its first yen loan to India in 1958. Japan's financial assistance which began with providing reparations and economic cooperation to Asian countries combined with an emphasis on providing cooperation towards those that have close links with Japan, has lifted Japan's image in the eyes of the countries in the region. This commensurate well with its considerable economic power as the second biggest economy after the U.S. during that period.

Nonetheless, Japan's active involvement in championing the international human security framework along with its ODA<sup>6</sup> effort is puzzling. Why did Japan, a country cynically regarded as a political and military "pygmy" as well as a "reactive"<sup>7</sup> state in term of its foreign affairs approach; pursue human security so aggressively? Japan's effort in championing the cause of international human security is also baffling as it was initiated during a time when the nation was facing its worst financial crisis vis-à-vis the "Lost Decade" (1991-2000), and the subsequent prolonged stagnation of its economy for another decade thereafter. In addition, Japan's international human security

diplomacy is not even a top priority under the foreign policy underlined by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>8</sup> Instead, human security has been placed as its fourth priority under the theme of tackling global issues.

A closer look into the existing literature on Japan's human security involvement reveals that most of the studies revolve mainly around the theoretical conception of, and approach towards human security. In most cases, Japan would be singled out as the perfect example of the differencing approach between the East and the West, in term of scope, core values, and their focus, with Canada as the representation of the West.<sup>9</sup> Japan's approach would usually reflect the promotion of intellectual dialog, development assistance and conflict prevention, while Canada's approach favors humanitarian intervention with greater emphasis on human rights.<sup>10</sup> In most cases, Japan's involvement in human security initiatives has been treated as a given, without a thorough discussion over its final destination.<sup>11</sup> In short, the bulk of the literature on Japan's involvement in human security is mainly theoretical, missing the effort to examine the reason for Japan's involvement with human security in the first place. Nevertheless, the work of comes close to this article's context when it stated that Japan's active participation in the human security initiatives would allow it to not only play a more active political role but also to avoid being branded as an aspiring military power by its domestic and international critics.<sup>12</sup> It, however, leaves the matter open-ended without further examining the end purpose of Japan in doing so. It thus provided a gap for this article to explore the relation between the aggressive pursuits of Japan's international human security diplomacy and its relentless efforts throughout the decades towards becoming a normal state.

To this end, this article seeks to address the gap by identifying the factors that drive Japan's motivation towards its active participation in the international human security initiatives despite the constraints of its pacifist constitution and financial limitations. It emphasizes the limit of Japan's security approaches under the restraint of its pacifism in coping with the new threats and issues brought about by the structural changes of the contemporary geo-strategic environment as the main reason for Japan to participate actively in the international human security initiatives. The concept of human security itself is very attractive to Japan as it enables the international community to be amenable to Japan assuming a more proactive role in the areas of multilateral security dialogues, peacekeeping missions, disaster relief provision, combating piracy, et cetera at the global stage. Pursuing human security provides a stronger case for Japan to justify its efforts towards becoming a normal state not only from the viewpoint of its own national security but also its ability to cooperate effectively with the international community towards achieving world peace and stability.

In order to effectively explain this argument, this article will be structured into three parts; the first part, the introduction; briefly elaborates

the problem statement of this article. The second part analyzes the interplay of structural and domestic factors that motivated the development of Japan's active and assertive approach to international human security diplomacy. Finally, the third part sums up the finding over this article's assumption that the diversification of Japan's international human security diplomacy under Abe's new security orientation is the process that would lead Japan towards becoming a normal state.<sup>13</sup>

## Japan's International Human Security Diplomacy

There are several important aspects in discussing Japan's international human security diplomacy. These include the country's motivations towards international human security diplomacy, war guilt and gestures of atonement, shaping a favorable geostrategic environment, threat perceptions, the UN doctrine on the R2P and domestic political intervention.

World War II left Japan completely devastated and facing an urgent need for economic and societal rehabilitation. The military alliance with and the crucial contribution made by the U.S. toward the reconstruction of Japan is the foundation of Japan's foreign and security policy. Under the security umbrella provided by the U.S., Japan is able to ensure peace and exercise democracy, focusing on its economic recovery and development without the need for any large-scale military rearmament. Under this condition, Japan emerged to become the world's second-biggest economy in the 1960s. Nevertheless, the most conspicuous development within the psyche of every Japanese people throughout the period since 1945 is the growing characteristic of its anti-military norm and principles within the society.<sup>14</sup> It shaped Japan's foreign policy towards peaceful means, such as foreign aid and investment, and cooperation in the civilian and non-military sphere of action.

Japan approaches its security from a broader perspective out of the traditional military dimension. It includes social, economic and political aspects in achieving its national security objectives.<sup>15</sup> The low priority given to military security in favor of a more comprehensive security policy was underpinned by the non-acceptance of the use of military force as a legitimate instrument of statecraft and a commitment to non-possession of war potential, which was incorporated in the post-war pacifist Constitution of 1947 through Article 9. It gave birth to Japan's concept of human security that *"comprehensively covers all the menaces that threaten human survival, daily life, and dignity—for example, environmental degradation, violations of human rights, transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, refugees, poverty, anti-personnel landmines and...infectious diseases such as AIDS—and strengthens efforts to confront these threats"*.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of human security emerged as a response to a series of new security challenges and threats associated with the post-Cold War period.

However, in the case of Japan, the awareness that sparked the nation's vision of human security could be traced back to the condition of Japan during the post-World War II period. It reflects the Japanese people's renouncement of war and its determination not to allow the reoccurrence of the suffering that they had endured during that difficult period. The regret, however, mainly revolves around the recognition that the suffering was due to their own deed, namely Japan's past militarism and the war crimes committed against the people in the Asia Pacific region. The feeling of deep remorse and guilt led Japan to start its war reparation efforts pursuant to the San Francisco Peace Treaty involving reparations to the Philippines (USD550 million) and Vietnam (USD39 million), payment to the International Committee of the Red Cross to compensate prisoners of war (4.5 million pound sterling), and the relinquishing of Japan's overseas assets (USD23.7 billion). In addition, war reparations made pursuant to individual peace treaties and other treaties were been extended to Burma (USD200 million) and Indonesia (USD223 million); whereas under the Japan-Soviet Union Joint Declaration (1956), both countries waived all reparations claims arising from the war.

Aside from war reparations, Japan joined the Colombo Plan on 6 October 1954. This marked Japan's government-to-government economic cooperation for the first time with developing countries. Beginning with its ODA<sup>17</sup> loan to India in 1958, Japan has expanded and diversified its ODA as its economy grew stronger in the mid-1960s, leading to the start of its general grant aid in 1969. Beginning from 1978, Japan diversified its ODA in terms of aid sectors (this included the consideration for Basic Human Needs (BHN) and human resources development in addition to economic infrastructure) and further expanded its geographical distribution involving assistance towards countries in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Pacific regions. On 30 June 1992, Japan adopted its ODA Charter focusing more towards direct threats to an individual from the perspective of human security ensuring human dignity is maintained at all stages, from the conflict stage to the reconstruction and development stages. Japan's determination to denounce war and the remorse of its past military aggression has not only brought it closer to supporting the idea of human security but also actively participating in the cause of international human security initiatives under its pragmatic cooperation schemes. The development of Japan's diplomacy under the pretext of human security not only fits well with the deeply embedded anti-military norm and principles within its society but also addressed the dilemma of Japan's previous war atrocities and aggression. It is a powerful tool to demonstrate Japan's sense of penitence and its strong determination and commitment shown under its human security initiatives towards improving its ties with the neighboring countries that it had once colonized.

In the context of shaping a favorable geostrategic environment, Japan's aggressive pursuit of international human security has played a vital role



from the perspective of cultivating trust among members of the international community on the grounds of promoting friendly relations and people-to-people exchanges with other countries. It has been used as an important diplomatic tool to protect Japan's national interest since its inception; driven by political motivations to rebuild disrupted political and economic relations with Asian countries. In addition, active participation in international human security initiatives has also enhanced Japan's presence within the international community and had further strengthened Japan's standing in the international arena. According to Shinoda, Japan faces constraints in its international cooperation concerning traditional security matters due to its pacifist constitutional and historical disadvantages.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, human security has proven to be an important instrument for Japan to compensate for its weakness in the traditional security field. This is evident in Japan's leadership role in the economic development of the region under the "flying geese pattern of development". The leadership role of Japan in this regard has been the catalyst of the global power shift to Asia.<sup>19</sup>

Japan aggressive pursuit of the international human security would also benefit the nation in a number of ways. It helps to create a favorable international environment, particularly since Japan relies on other countries for resources and food while depending on international peace for its security. It has also proven to be meaningful when Japan dealt with important bilateral relations. For instance, Japan concluded the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation with Saudi Arabia in 1975<sup>20</sup> which had not only further strengthened its bilateral relationship with Saudi Arabia but has also resolved its oil supply shortage due to the First Oil Crisis in 1973. Japan's efforts in the field of human security also help in ensuring its own security and prosperity, particularly the revitalization of its economy in the context of the spillover effects arising from the dynamic growth of developing and emerging countries. In the case of the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s, Japan swiftly intervened through its "New Miyazawa Initiative" to assist Asian countries in overcoming their economic difficulties and to contribute to the stability of the international financial market in the region. This initiative, directly or indirectly, served the interests of Japan, for whom Asian countries are important partners for trade and investments.

Meanwhile, in the context of threat perceptions, Japan's national security strategy has traditionally been influenced by two main factors. The first is the changing geostrategic environment coupled with an equally complex international context that contributed to Japan perceiving itself as being extremely vulnerable to external threats. The second factor relates to domestic policies that have been polarized by two main debates, the revival of Japan's past military capacity versus the preservation of the post-war Japan pacifist choice as enshrined in the country's constitution. From a strategic perspective, these two factors have determined Japan's security policy direction based on



the security dilemma brought about by the number of perceived threats that led to Japan utilizing its international human security diplomacy as a means to justify its action of exerting military elements into its security posture. Among the external factors that pose critical threats to Japan are the Japan-U.S. alliance, the rise of China, and North Korea's military provocations.<sup>21</sup>

According to Kawashima<sup>22</sup> and Samuels<sup>23</sup>, U.S. is the key pillar of Japan's national security. Thus, Washington's stance and policies in East Asia would have a direct impact on Japan's security environment and its leadership threat perception. The deepening of Japan-U.S. alliance lies in Japan's support towards the continuation of the U.S.-led international order. The U.S. expectation is that any shifts in the U.S.-led international and regional systems in which Japan has been so firmly embedded should reflect a similar counter-reaction from Japan. Given the fact that Japan has no genuine alternative allies, it is caught in a classical alliance dilemma between abandonment (the ally defects during the crisis) and entrapment (the ally forces involvement in crisis). Although Japan is still strongly committed to its UN-oriented foreign policies with a strong inclination towards human security initiatives,<sup>24</sup> has rightly observed that the expectation of the U.S. in its alliance is focused towards Japan as a nation that could exercise its right to collective self-defense, playing a complementary role to the U.S.'s agenda and its foreign policy objectives.<sup>25</sup>

Against this expectation, Japan inability to assume a greater share of responsibility in the alliance has brought about uncertainty in the U.S. motivation to sustain the same level of commitment towards the alliance.<sup>26</sup> This condition posed a challenge for policymakers of contemporary Japan in the context of the Japan-U.S. alliance. The big question now is how to pursue a more mature Japan-U.S. alliance whereby Japan is less dependent on; while at the same time being treated as equal and less deferential, to the U.S.

When discussing the rise of China there two main issues that generate threat and peril among the Japanese leadership, China's military build-up and its projection towards territorial expansionism. According to Bitzinger, China spent USD10 billion on its defense budget in 1997.<sup>27</sup> In 2015 the budget rose to USD145 billion, funding a rapid modernization of China's armed forces that are slowly narrowing the military gap with the Japan-U.S. alliance. This surge coincides with China's increased assertiveness over its territorial and maritime claims, which puts it at loggerheads with Japan and much of the rest of Asia. Japan is wary of China's perceived intention in changing the Asian status quo in its favor, and that it will rely on economic leverage and military force to achieve its ambitions. Under its new clout, becoming the regional hegemon is eminently sensible from China's standpoint. However, this is not in the interest of Japan or the U.S. Although this security competition might not lead to a wider war could potentially lead to armed conflict in the East and South China seas.

Concurrently, there is a notion within Japan that the nation's economic interdependent with China could prevent potential conflicts between their two countries from occurring. Nevertheless, based on the experience of Japanese businesses in China, they had come to learn that such hope is just a wishful thinking. Chinese nationalism is so powerful that if a crisis breaks out, there may be great pressure from nationalist sentiment from below in China on the leaders to rise against Japan. This is evident in the incident of 2012 where hundreds of Japanese businesses had to shut down their operations throughout China due to the widespread and increasingly violent demonstrations across China protesting Tokyo's decision to acquire the Senkaku Islands from their private owner.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the hope for a solution under the rule of law through international institutions, and nurturing a web of exchanges and confidence-building measures within more robust regional security architecture were to no avail as China would not obey the rules when they do not think it's in their interest. China has demonstrated this with its establishment of its Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea. This also included its rejection of the Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling (in the case brought to the court by the Philippines) that Beijing had violated the Philippines' sovereign rights in the South China Sea.

The same constraints that Japan faces in dealing with the rise of China also weigh heavily on how it should respond to North Korea's rapidly advancing nuclear weapon program. Japan's policymakers have had an increasingly stronger reaction to North Korea's military provocations since the 1990s. North Korea's numerous missile and nuclear tests, coupled with bilateral tensions over its incursions into Japanese territorial waters, and the abductions of Japanese citizens has made North Korea Japan's most prominent threat.<sup>29</sup> Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines for its fiscal year 2005 clearly declared North Korea as Japan's top security anxiety, even apparently relegating China to a secondary position. The document refers to North Korea as a "major de-stabilizing factor" for regional and international security; whereas China's military modernization is simply referred to as requiring "careful attention."<sup>30</sup>

Today, North Korea's nuclear threat and its provocative behavior have grown into an unprecedented, critical, and imminent level. In 2016 alone, North Korea conducted its nuclear tests twice, on 6 January 2016 and 9 September 2016 respectively. Subsequently, its sixth nuclear test held on 3 September 2017 has detonated far more destructive power than the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II. The tremors caused by the test could be felt as far as South Korea and China. On 15 September 2017, North Korea tested intermediate range ballistic missile that flew over Japan before landing in the northern of Pacific Ocean. The missile test follows the release of a statement issued by the North Korean State News Agency (KCNA), which threatened that the "four islands of the Japanese archipelago should be

sunken into the sea by the nuclear bomb of *Juche*".

Nevertheless, the most important factor of North Korea's provocative acts towards Japan is the continual tests it had exerted on the solidarity of the Japan-U.S. alliance, undermining the very foundation of Japan's post-war security. Hughes observed that Japan's compromise of its pacifist principles by taking part in the U.S.-led "war on terror" through the dispatch of its SDF troops to Iraq between 2004-2006, can in large part be interpreted as the need to strengthen the solidarity of its alliance in responding to North Korea nuclear threat.<sup>31</sup>

Under the UN's R2P doctrine, humanitarian intervention has been the object of intense debate involving diverging positions at the United Nations. It gained currency particularly in the 1990s' when the world was taken aback by the outbreak of mass-scale killings and humanitarian disasters in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, where the international community had been seen as too slow in taking decisive and effective action to protect civilians at risk in these countries. At the heart of this occurrence lies the tension between two conflicting fundamental principles of international law on state's sovereignty, namely the prohibition on the use of force and the obligation to respect and protect human rights. In December 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) released its report on the concept of R2P, outlining its three components, namely the "Responsibility to Prevent", "Responsibility to React" and "Responsibility to Rebuild". The Commission proposed the answer to the question of "when" is it appropriate for states to take coercive actions (i.e. economic sanction, military intervention etc.) against another state by shifting the understanding of state sovereignty. The report underscored that in situations where states were proving unable, or unwilling, to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity within their own territory; their right to sovereignty should be discarded to allow interveners to protect their populations under threat. The doctrine on R2P was endorsed by all the member states of the UN at the 2005 World Summit held from 14 to 16 September 2005 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. It has since, occupies an important space within the UN through reports of the Secretary-General of the UN and the resolutions of the UN Security Council (UNSC).

As the second largest contributor to the UN budget<sup>32</sup> after the U.S., Japan is expected to play a role in implementing the R2P. Japan, given its emphasis on human security's non-military approach, faces a challenge of responding to R2P advocates and critics. Supporting R2P might signal that Japan is abandoning its post-World War II pacifism while opposing the new security doctrine could weaken Japan's position in UN diplomacy. It could also sideline Japan's strengths in capacity building that has, for quite some time, allowed it to remain within its comfort zone in its international participation. Consequently, Japan took the compromised position of 'passively' supporting

the World Summit adoption of R2P. However, according to Samuels (2007), over the last decade, Japan political scene has been dominated by revisionist policy-makers that rose from the nationalist agendas led by factions within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). They view the global normalization of R2P as opening the window of opportunity for Japan to conduct a more active role in fulfilling its responsibility to respond collectively in a timely and decisive manner that extends beyond non-military activities. From that perspective, R2P creates a legitimate basis for Japan to utilize its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) more widely and comprehensively to participate in international collective defense operations. This is consistent with the longstanding revisionist agenda of normalizing Japan's military function and amendment of Article 9 of the Constitution that constrains Japan's security posture.

The Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) victory in 2012 elections saw Shinzo Abe regaining the post of Prime Minister, which he had already held briefly in 2006-2007. The LDP's electoral agenda under Abe was based on several ambitious, and in part unprecedented, political initiatives. It aimed at, among others, giving new impetus to the stagnant Japanese economy, revising the role of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF), and reinforcing Japan's international status and national pride. The 2012 electoral campaign was marked by one of the most serious foreign policy crises experienced by Japan in its post-World War II history. The Senkaku dispute with China brought bilateral relations between Japan and China to their lowest point since their normalization in 1972. Hostile confrontation with Beijing resulted in a burst of nationalism within the Japanese public that saw their resolve towards supporting Abe's agenda. This helped in the LDP's return to power after a three-year intermission. Abe's political agenda includes an in-depth revision and re-interpretation of Japan's self-imposed restrictions on using the nation's self-defense forces overseas and essentially aimed to "normalize" Japan's security and foreign policy in responding to the growing threats brought about by the changing geostrategic environment.

Abe's pragmatic view towards Japan's security would mean Japan's international human security diplomacy should include the nation's ability to exercise collective self-defense in light of its own national security needs. With Japan's present financial limitation; it should prudently utilize its financial allocation in this regard to bring more visible benefits, or payoffs, to Japan in the context of its foreign policy. Japan must distance itself from being seen as only taking the role of financially<sup>33</sup> supporting the military actions legitimized by the UN Security Council resolutions. This could lead towards the global community perceiving Japan as a self-centered mercantilist state benefiting as a free rider under the UN security umbrella. Most importantly, the nature of Japan's present threats would require a crucial reevaluation of its overall defense policy involving the ability to exercise collective self-defense. Hence Abe's efforts towards transforming the nation's security orientation under the

present threats faced by Japan would also lead to an effort to transform its international human security diplomacy to remain relevant in this regard.

### **Towards a Normal Country?**

Japan's foreign policy was traditionally not driven by ideological orientations. It mainly aims at ensuring its survival in an international system created and dominated by more powerful countries. Japan's international actions had been reactive and hardly ever showed proactive action. Therefore, many scholars find it convenient to conclude that the quest for survival still remains the hallmark of Japanese foreign policy until today. According to Curtis, Japan did not seek to advance its interests by defining the international agenda, propagating a particular ideology, or promoting its own vision of the world order.<sup>34</sup> Rather, Japan takes its external environment as a given and then make pragmatic adjustments to keep in step with "the trends of the time".

On the contrary, the author observed that the perceptions of a "reactive" Japan vis-à-vis its foreign policy orientation are somewhat naive, perhaps done under shallow analysis. With full awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, Japan, on the contrary, has undertaken several proactive measures on many occasions since the post-World War II period until now. Japan's success in incorporating the concept of human security into its foreign policy implementation is the best example in this regard. The pursuit of human security had opened an avenue for Japan to advance towards its more than century-old ambition of becoming an international leader. The establishment of the CHS and the UNTFHS were steps taken by the Japanese government towards assuming a leadership role on an issue that had gained in prominence in international politics. Placing both the UNTFHS and the CHS under the umbrella of the UN was also a smart move by Japan. It signified an understanding of how important integrating the nation into global political decision-making within the context of a multilateral framework and being at the driver seat in such institutions is.

Under the disadvantage of being a war-defeated nation and the mounting challenges it has to face in order to rebuild its devastated infrastructures and war-torn society, Japan came back from its total devastation in 1945 to become Asia's economic superpower. Japanese manufacturing has set a standard for global production. Japan has brilliantly subdued its brutal image of the war by adhering closely to the pacifist constitution forced upon it by the allied occupation led by the U.S. Under the projection of its "reactive" manner, Japan has shrewdly distanced itself from the burden of military spending while utilizing all the time it has on devising sound policies for its industrial development and economic advancement. At the same time, it also undertook a pro-active role by establishing its overseas development assistance under the ambit of ODA. This created a favorable cooperative environment

towards its leadership in the field thus gaining a positive reception particularly from countries in the region that it had brutally colonized in the past. By incorporating human security as part of its foreign policy formulation under its human security diplomacy, Japan has again made a pro-active step by positioning human security as the cornerstone of its international cooperation in the 21st century. The success of Japan's leadership on this front is evident in the high expectation of then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's towards its potential and capability in human security initiatives as he expressed how he was "heartened to see the commitment by Japan to continue playing its leadership role".<sup>35</sup>

Human security was a concept that came in handy for Japanese political leaders at times when Japan needed to be seen as "unambitious" militarily and reactive in its political affairs, in the way prescribed by the Yoshida Doctrine. In its search for prestige and global standing, it is necessary for Japan to escape the narrow-minded preoccupation of its relationship with the U.S., and human security made this perspective potentially realizable. The low politics nature of the human security field offered the prospect of Japanese international leadership that would not encroach into the mindset of the U.S. prerogative to be the leader and Japan as the follower, as far as international security affairs were concerned. It is an area where Japan could act fairly freely and in ways that it found fit, without offending the U.S. Pursuing human security has enabled Japan to engage in activities devised in Tokyo, not Washington.

At the backdrop of Japan's foreign policy evolution, this article believes that Japan sits on an untapped wealth of soft power reserves. The most prominent strategy undertaken by the Japanese policy makers in the formulation of its foreign policy since 1945 is how it managed to put forth a positive image of Japan as a philanthropic country with noble objectives of making the world a better place by assisting the development of countries throughout the world through its ODA mechanism. This effort succeeded in subduing its past war-time negative image and changed it into a positive outlook of Japan as a peace-loving nation. This strategy was further strengthened when Japan played a leadership role in the realm of human security with its human security diplomacy. Japan, through its human security diplomacy, has moved towards assuming a proactive role in the security affairs of Southeast Asia in the areas of multilateral security dialogues, disaster relief provision, and combating piracy, among others. As the Southeast Asian countries becoming more willing to have Japan assume a security role in the region, these proactive initiatives by Japan have contributed to the positive development of Japan-Southeast Asia relations. This has resulted in the heightened trust and confidence levels towards Japan.

Nonetheless, in ensuring its survival with the challenges and threats brought about by the ever-changing geostrategic environment, Japan cannot run away from the reality that it would have to deal with its traditional security

affairs sooner or later. Imminent threats such as the rise of China and China's willingness to project its military power over its territorial claim, the potential escalation of Japan's maritime territorial disputes with its surrounding neighbors, and the growing threat of nuclear attack by North Korea cannot be dealt under Japan's condition as an abnormal country. Neither can the systemic pressure towards the structural change in its security posture in the forms of the U.S.'s pressure (for Japan to support it in term of military involvement to ensure the functioning of their alliance) and the UN's expectation (for Japan to play a greater role in its humanitarian interventions) be dealt with in a satisfactory manner either. Being a pragmatic leader, Abe realized that Japan would have to face the most difficult process of its foreign policy orientation. It needs to formulate a long-term strategy for Japan towards becoming a normal state. Under these circumstances, Abe would have to utilize Japan's soft power mechanisms toward this end, and one of the potential vehicles for Japan to travel smoothly along that road is through the transformation of its human security diplomacy.

A significant reason that allows Japan to utilize human security diplomacy as a platform for its security strategy transformation is its proven track record over the years in changing the Southeast Asian countries' perceptions towards Japan. Research has shown that voices once critical of Japanese participation in the political/security sphere in Southeast Asia have lessened.<sup>36</sup> For instance, former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in his speech delivered at a welcoming dinner during the official visit by then Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa to Malaysia on 14 January 1993 stated that *"...The decision of the Japanese Government to send its troops on peace-keeping mission to Cambodia under the United Nations' auspices was indeed historic. Malaysia wholeheartedly welcomes the decision and hopes that Japan would participate fully in the peace-keeping activities of the United Nations."* Mahathir & Ishihara also clearly state that, *"...We believe rising nationalism in Japan is just a wake-up call for the new generation of Japan..."* concerning the subject of rising nationalism in Japan.<sup>37</sup> Another vital yet controversial comment that insinuated support for Japan's effort towards becoming a normal country came from that of the Philippines President of Senate Blas F. Ople that who stated, *"...Japan should seriously consider arming itself with nuclear weapons...my own guess is that it's just a matter of time"*.<sup>38</sup>

The multi-dimensional nature of the concept of human security also presents another compelling reason. Since its inception, Japan had partially participated in the non-traditional security issues under the pretext of "freedom of want". This emphasized the importance of economic development and provision for basic human need. Japan's approach has been shaped by its ad-hoc programs focusing on economic development and community building under its ODA. On the other hand, although a human security strategy is



basically a non-military and non-coercive approach, one cannot reject the need to recognize that various factors of violence, power, and a coercive order originating from the spread of terrorism and endless conflicts exist in the world today. There are situations where states were unable or unwilling to protect their citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity within their own territory, and that it would be the responsibility of the international community's intervention to put the stop to such aggression. This is another aspect of human security concept that falls under the "freedom from fear" context that requires the purview of military and coercive measures such as economic sanctions. This concept has also been pursued and defined under the UN doctrine of R2P. This is the part that lacked Japan's participation and could be an ideal justification for Japan in dealing with its constitutional constraints to allow for greater participation of its SDF's in UN humanitarian interventions.

In order to realize this, Abe has brilliantly formulated and introduced Japan's "pro-active contribution to peace" as the basic principle of its national security strategy to be incorporated under Japan's international human security diplomacy. The principle was included in Japan's Cabinet decision on the Development Cooperation Charter dated 10 February 2015 as it commemorates the 60th Anniversary of its ODA that reads, *"...Japan and the international community are at a major crossroads. In this new era, Japan must strongly lead the international community, as a nation that contributes even more proactively to securing peace, stability and prosperity of the international community from the perspective of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on the principle of international cooperation..."* It underscored Japan's commitment to further strengthened collaboration with other countries under the ambit of the UN. Perhaps the most glaring feature of Abe's security policy as compared to that of his predecessors is that his policy has departed from relying primarily on Japan's various forms of financial assistance. The policy has now slowly encroached into the realm of Japanese military contribution in the context of its human security diplomacy that emphasized upholding the principle of the "freedom from fear". This principle requires coercive measures in securing international peace and stability.

## Conclusion

Abe promised to change Japan upon returning to the office to lead his second administration in 2012. Looking at his term thus far and his efforts to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance, revise his country's security policies, and pursue difficult economic reforms, Abe has already proven to be one of Japan's most transformative premiers. Perhaps, more than anything else, he has drawn attention for his successful effort to pass a package of security-related bills under the process of reinterpreting Article 9 of the Constitution.

Given the changes in the security environment, it is essential for Japan to explain in advance to its citizens how they plan to maintain peace and stability and to protect them, both during peacetime and in cases of emergencies. Long-term security strategies must also be explained to other countries to avoid unfounded misunderstanding on specific policies and to promote bilateral, as well as multilateral, cooperation. Abe has done exactly that by transforming its human security diplomacy into a proactive contribution to peace based on international cooperation.

Under the newly transformed human security diplomacy, Abe established Japan's first ever National Security Strategy (NSS) on 17 December 2017 to address the worsening security environment surrounding the country. These contemporary security challenges have evolved beyond the defense of territorial integrity, involving terrorism, piracy, cyber-attacks, energy resources, space, climate change, pandemics, failed states, international crime networks, and the illegal trafficking of arms and narcotics, to name just a few. The new interconnected, unpredictable and diversified in nature insecurity threats demand a more sophisticated, comprehensive, and integrated response, that could not be effectively done under Japan's condition as an abnormal country. In facing these security threats, one has to have both a comprehensive hard and soft security approach in order to build a resilient society. This requires the strengthening of Japan's own military capabilities, changing the Constitution to allow more flexibility on security policies, broadening the scope of the alliance for regional and global challenges, and expanding security ties with other like-minded nations.

Even though the 1990s was a "Lost Decade" for Japan in an economic sense, this article finds that it was a period of major transformation for Japan's security policy. Beginning with its exemplary leadership under its human security diplomacy, Japan since then has steadily moved towards the re-institutionalization of its security policy in full public view. The significant milestone would be the establishment of the nation's Ministry of Defense on 9 January 2007, taking its stature from an agency to a full-fledged Ministry. Japan's newfound "leadership" originating from its aggressive human security initiatives in the 1990s reflects years of relentless efforts by its politicians and policy makers in integrating autonomy and prestige for the first time in Japan's modern history. Without a doubt, this process is further continued and gain its momentum under Abe's "proactive contribution to peace" policy. In addition to leading Japan towards becoming a normal state, Abe's proactive contribution to peace stressed on Japan role as a responsible nation with its security check and balances that would repeal the negative notion of "Japan's remilitarization". In the era of globalization and the face of new threats and challenges, becoming "normal" is prerequisite for Japan to ensure its own security while at the same time "weave" itself into the fabric of collaboration with the international community in ensuring sustainable world peace, stability, and resilience.

## Endnotes

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- 2 Gareth Porter & Brown Janet Welsh, *Global Environmental Politics*, Westview Press, 1996, p. 28-30.
- 3 For more information refer to the handbook entitled Human Security in Theory and Practice, Application of the Human Security Concept and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security at [www.tr.undp.org/.../UNDP-TR-HSHandbook\\_2009.pdf](http://www.tr.undp.org/.../UNDP-TR-HSHandbook_2009.pdf). This handbook has been developed by the HSU-OCHA under the guidance of Dr. Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, Sciences Po, and in close collaboration with Ms. Hitomi Kubo, Sciences Po, and Ms. Elianna Konialis. The Commission on Human Security was established in January 2001 in response to the UN Secretary-General's call at the 2000 Millennium Summit for a world "free from want" and "free from fear." The Commission consisted of twelve prominent international figures, including Mrs. Sadako Ogata (former UN High Commissioner for Refugees) and Professor Amartya Sen (1998 Nobel Economics Prize Laureate). (Accessed 2 November 2017).
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### **Acknowledgement**

The paper is part of ongoing research project supported by the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia research grant GGPM-2017-061